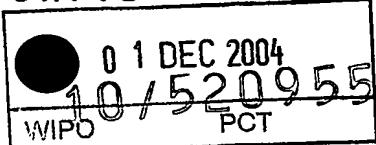


## PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT  
(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference  XXX	<b>FOR FURTHER ACTION</b>	See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/IPEA/416)
International application No. PCT/EP 03/07541	International filing date (day/month/year) 11.07.2003	Priority date (day/month/year) 11.07.2002
International Patent Classification (IPC) or both national classification and IPC C25C7/00		
Applicant DE NORA ELETTRODI S.P.A. et al.		

1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.

2. This REPORT consists of a total of 5 sheets, including this cover sheet.

This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e. sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT).

These annexes consist of a total of sheets.

3. This report contains indications relating to the following items:

- I  Basis of the opinion
- II  Priority
- III  Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability
- IV  Lack of unity of invention
- V  Reasoned statement under Rule 66.2(a)(ii) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement
- VI  Certain documents cited
- VII  Certain defects in the international application
- VIII  Certain observations on the international application

Date of submission of the demand  11.02.2004	Date of completion of this report  30.11.2004
Name and mailing address of the international preliminary examining authority:   European Patent Office D-80298 Munich Tel. +49 89 2399 - 0 Tx: 523656 epmu d Fax: +49 89 2399 - 4465	Authorized Officer  Mizera, E Telephone No. +49 89 2399-8580



**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY  
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/EP 03/07541

**I. Basis of the report**

1. With regard to the **elements** of the international application (*Replacement sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to this report since they do not contain amendments (Rules 70.16 and 70.17)*):

**Description, Pages**

1-12 as originally filed

**Claims, Numbers**

1-55 as originally filed

**Drawings, Sheets**

1/10-10/10 as originally filed

2. With regard to the **language**, all the elements marked above were available or furnished to this Authority in the language in which the international application was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.

These elements were available or furnished to this Authority in the following language: , which is:

- the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of the international search (under Rule 23.1(b)).
- the language of publication of the international application (under Rule 48.3(b)).
- the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination (under Rule 55.2 and/or 55.3).

3. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international preliminary examination was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing:

- contained in the international application in written form.
- filed together with the international application in computer readable form.
- furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.
- furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.
- The statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.
- The statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished.

4. The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:

- the description, pages:
- the claims, Nos.:
- the drawings, sheets:

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY  
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/EP 03/07541

5.  This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed (Rule 70.2(c)).  
*(Any replacement sheet containing such amendments must be referred to under item 1 and annexed to this report.)*

6. Additional observations, if necessary:

**III. Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability**

1. The questions whether the claimed invention appears to be novel, to involve an inventive step (to be non-obvious), or to be industrially applicable have not been examined in respect of:
- the entire international application,  
 claims Nos. 55  
because:  
 the said international application, or the said claims Nos. relate to the following subject matter which does not require an international preliminary examination (specify):  
 the description, claims or drawings (*indicate particular elements below*) or said claims Nos. 55 are so unclear that no meaningful opinion could be formed (specify):  
**see separate sheet**  
 the claims, or said claims Nos. are so inadequately supported by the description that no meaningful opinion could be formed.  
 no international search report has been established for the said claims Nos.
2. A meaningful international preliminary examination cannot be carried out due to the failure of the nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence listing to comply with the standard provided for in Annex C of the Administrative Instructions:
- the written form has not been furnished or does not comply with the Standard.  
 the computer readable form has not been furnished or does not comply with the Standard.

**V. Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement**

**1. Statement**

Novelty (N)	Yes: Claims	1-54
	No: Claims	
Inventive step (IS)	Yes: Claims	1-54
	No: Claims	
Industrial applicability (IA)	Yes: Claims	1-54
	No: Claims	

**2. Citations and explanations**

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY  
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/EP 03/07541

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see separate sheet

**AS TO BOX III:**

1. Claim 55 is entirely unclear and does not meet the requirements of Art.6 PCT, as no specific features defining the claimed cell element are contained therein.

**AS TO BOX V:**

1. The following document is cited:

D1: US-A-4 019 968 (PLACIDO M. SPAZIANTE) 26 April 1977 (1977-04-26)

2. Document D1, cited as closest prior art, discloses a cell element as claimed in claim 1 for the electrowinning of metal which differs from the teaching of this claim merely by the provision of a draft tube capable of establishing a spouted bed of metallic beads.
3. With regard to this prior art independent claims 1, 46 and 50 and claims 2-45, 47-49 and 50-54, depending on these claims, meet the requirements of Art.33(2) PCT(novelty).
4. According to p.1, I.13-16 and p.2, I.1-8 the problems to be solved concern the drawbacks of batch processes and the possibility of stacking the cells in laminar arrangements. The presence of a draft tube facilitates the re-circulation of metallic beads. As further constructional elements serving this purpose are not required for the desired continuous operation, the cell elements can be easily laminated to a compact stack. Moreover the mechanical stability of the stacked cells is improved.
5. For these reasons claims 1-54 are regarded as meeting the requirements of Art.33(3) PCT (inventive step).
6. Already now reference is made to document WO-A-02053809, which is not to be regarded as prior art under the PCT, but which might become relevant during the regional phase. The presence of a draft tube in a cell comprising a spouted bed of metallic beads appears to be disclosed in Fig.1 and 5 (see also p.10, I.33-37 and p.2, I.12-30, in particular I.24-30).